

Message Text

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16

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 552

UNCLAS CARACAS 10819

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG PFOR VE

SUBJECT: OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM BRIBERY CASE

REF CARACAS 10649

1. VENEZUELAN CONGRESS OCT 13 DECIDED TO APPOINT A SPECIAL
BICAMERAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE ALLEGED BRIBERY OF GOV OFFICIALS

BY THE OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM CORP. COMMITTEE'S MEMBERS WILL BE
SELECTED ON OCT 16, AND AD DEPUTY ARTURO HERNANDEZ GRISANTI HAS
ANNOUNCED THAT ACCION DEMOCRATICA WILL RELINQUISH ITS RIGHT TO CHAIR
THE COMMITTEE IN FAVOR OF A MINORITY PARTY REPRESENTATIVE.

2. THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES OCT 15 COMMENCED CONSIDERATION OF
THE CASE, WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF COPEI, MAS, MEP, MIR, URD,
PCV AND OPINA AGREEING THAT THE INVESTIGATION OF THE MATTER SHOULD BE
EXHAUSTIVE. MAS DEPUTY JOSE VICENTE RANGEL RECALLED THAT OCCIDENTAL
PRESIDENT ARMAND HAMMER HAD BEEN GIVEN A HIGH VENEZUELAN DECORATION.

3. THE TWELFTH JUDGE OF THE FIRST INSTANCE IN THE JUDICIAL DISTRICT
OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT AND THE SATE OF MIRANDA, DR. NOEL PANTOJA
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HAS BEEN GIVEN COGNIZANCE OF THE CASE. AT LEAST TWO SPECIAL

PROSECUTORS (FISCALES) HAVE BEEN NAMED TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE. PRESS REPORTS THAT THE GOV FISCAL GENERAL (ATTORNEY GENERAL), DR. JOSE RAMON MEDINA, HAS ASKED THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON URGENTLY TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST OCCIDENTAL FILED IN TEXAS BY OCCIDENTAL'S EX-CARACAS MANAGER JOHN F. RYAN. PRESS QUOTES INTERIOR AFFAIRS MINISTER LEPAGE AS REITERATING THE GOV'S GUARANTEES TO RYAN IF HE WOULD COME TO VENEZUELA TO TESTIFY. ASKED WHAT THE GOV WOULD DO IF RYAN DID NOT COME TO VENEZUELA, LEPAGE REPLIED THAT THE GOV WOULD USE "OTHER MEANS" TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE. PRESS QUOTES FISCAL GENERAL MEDINA AS SAYING "WE COULD HAVE SENT RYAN AN EX-OFFICIO INVITATION TO COME TO THIS COUNTRY, BUT WE CANNOT FORCE HIM TO DO SO. WHAT REMAINS OPEN TO US IS TO REQUEST THROUGH A LETTER ROGATORY TO THE U.S. PENAL COURTS THAT MR. RYAN MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT THE MATTER WHICH COULD THUS BE INCORPORATED INTO THE INVESTIGATION BEING MADE." ONE PRESS ACCOUNT INDICATES THAT TWO GOV FISCALES, ACCOMPANIED BY ATTORNEYS FROM THE FISCALIA GENERAL AND THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS, WILL VISIT THE U.S. TO OBTAIN AN AFFIDAVIT FROM RYAN.

4. COMMENT: THE INITIAL SENSATION CAUSED LAST WEEK BY THE NEW YORK TIMES STORY DESCRIBING RYAN'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST OCCIDENTAL HAS DIED DOWN, AND MEDIA INTEREST HAS CORRESPONDINGLY DIMINISHED. HOWEVER, A FRESH DEVELOPMENT UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD GENERATE GREAT LOCAL INTEREST AND HEAVY PRESS PLAY.
SHLAUDEMAM

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